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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002963

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/13/2028  
TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#) [IR](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI-KUWAITI BILATERAL ISSUES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2944  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2427

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Classified By: Senior Advisor Gordon Gray for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C/REL MNFI) Deputy Foreign Minister Hamoud told us on September 11 the Kuwaiti Prime Minister would visit Iraq shortly after Ramadan concludes. He said a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on clearing the Khor Abudllah waterway of shipwrecks remained 'stuck' in the Prime Minister's office and another MOU to survey the Khor Abdullah for a new pipeline remained without action since Senior Advisor Gray's last discussion with Hamoud on August 19. Likewise, no action had been taken toward constructing a housing complex for Iraqi farmers encroaching on the Kuwaiti side of the border, and no steps to extend the hours of operation at the Safwan border were envisaged until the security situation there improved. The Deputy Foreign Minister held out little hope that Iraq would soon follow through to appoint its own ambassadors to the region and he discussed Iranian interest in SOFA negotiations with the U.S. during his recent trip to Iran. End summary.

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KUWAITI PRIME MINISTER TO VISIT IRAQ  
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[1](#)2. (C/REL MNFI) At a September 11 meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Foreign Minister Muhammad Haj Hamoud told Senior Advisor for Southern Iraq Affairs Gordon Gray that his planned trip to Kuwait had been delayed due to a trip to Kuwait by the Iraqi Finance Minister Bayan Jabr which sought to lay the groundwork for a subsequent visit to Iraq by the Kuwaiti Prime Minister, Sheikh Nasser al-Ahmed al-Sabah (ref A). Hamoud said the Kuwaiti Prime Minister's visit would almost certainly occur after Ramadan concludes.

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MARITIME BORDER REMAINS SENSITIVE ISSUE  
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[1](#)3. (C/REL MNFI) Hamoud said that virtually all land border issues between Kuwait and Iraq were now settled - with the only remaining issues being "some very sensitive differences about the maritime borders." Saying that Iraq was trying to avoid complications with its neighbors, Hamoud said he awaited instructions from the Foreign Minister and Prime

Minister about how to proceed on the maritime border issue. He complained that in previous years the United Nations established the maritime border (i.e., in the Khor Abdullah) as the midline between the two banks, rather than the eastern bank of Buibyan island.

¶4. (C/REL MNFI) Hamoud stated that Iraq does not want to raise the maritime issue with the Kuwaitis, fearing the appearance of Iraqi designs on Kuwaiti territory. He hoped, however, that the Kuwaiti Prime Minister may raise the issues on his own initiative during his upcoming visit to Iraq. When questioned by Gray about the fact that UNSC Resolution 833 chose the midline to facilitate freedom of navigation for both parties, Hamoud countered that it was nonetheless an issue of sovereignty and one never knew if someday oil or some other valuable commodity might be discovered in the waterway.

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MOU FOR KHOR ABDULLAH STILL STUCK  
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¶5. (C/REL MNFI) Gray asked Hamoud about the status of the proposed MOU between Kuwait and Iraq on the removal of wrecks from the Khor Abdullah (ref B). Hamoud said that the MOU was still pending in the Prime Minister's office - exactly where it was when Gray discussed the subject with Hamoud one month earlier. Hamoud blamed "purely personal bad relations" between Prime Minister Maliki and Foreign Minister Zebari for the delay and said that Zebari tried repeatedly to telephone Maliki about the issue, but without success. Hamoud was quick to add that he considered the MFA to be perhaps the most professional and efficient of all the Iraqi ministries.

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¶6. (C/REL MNFI) Gray also inquired as to whether there had been any change in Iraqi views towards surveying the Khor Abdullah for purposes of laying a new oil pipeline to increase the capacity for Iraqi oil exports (ref B). Saying there had been "nothing at this point," Hamoud made clear that if it were raised by the Kuwaiti Prime Minister, Maliki would be prepared to respond and discuss the issue. Hamoud explained that Maliki asked Hamoud to convene a delegation to meet with him a few days before the Kuwaiti Prime Minister's visit to prepare him for discussion of the common issues between Iraq and Kuwait. Hamoud agreed with Gray's assessment that the visit of the Kuwait Prime Minister could serve as an action forcing event on both MOUs.

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LAND BORDER ISSUES: FARMERS AND SAFWAN  
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¶7. (C/REL MNFI) Gray also followed up with the Deputy Foreign Minister on the subject of the housing complex to be built for Iraqi farmers living on the Kuwaiti side of the border (ref B). Hamoud said the land had been identified and a draft plan for the complex had been hand-delivered by the Iraqi Charge d'affaires in Kuwait to the Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister. (Note: we presume he means Under Secretary Jarallah. End note.) Hamoud said Iraq was now waiting for Kuwait to start the project.

¶8. (C/REL MNFI) Gray inquired of Hamoud about the possibility of extending the hours of the border crossing at Safwan - as has been previously requested (ref B). Hamoud assured that the border crossing would be opened when the security situation improves. "We would like it to stay open 24 hours, but not yet," he said.

¶9. (C/REL MNFI) Gray also asked Hamoud for an update on the appointment of Ambassadors from Iraq to regional Arab countries. "We proposed names" he said, "but there has been no movement" from the Prime Minister's office. He said that it was a problem because Iraq was losing the initiative, and

cited the delay as another example of the poor relationship between the Prime Minister's office and the MFA.

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IRANIAN INTEREST IN SOFA  
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¶10. (C/REL MNFI) Hamoud also discussed his recent visit to Tehran. He said that Iranian Deputy Minister Sheikh Attar (whom he described as "number one after the minister") asked Hamoud about the Status of Forces negotiations with the U.S. during their one-hour meeting. Hamoud said he assured the Iranians that the agreement would not affect the relationship between Iraq and Iran. "We avoided everything, I told him, and have an agreement that there can be no attack from Iraqi territories." Hamoud stated that the Iranians "seemed convinced." (Septel reports on his discussions in Tehran on the Shatt al-Arab.)

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COMMENT  
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¶11. The upcoming visit of Kuwait's Prime Minister holds the promise of spurring the Iraqis to action on a number of important issues, most notably the two MOUs for surveys in the Khor Abdullah. The MOUs will facilitate economic development in southern Iraq. The advantages for Iraq are clear; Kuwait would also benefit by increased investment opportunities and by enhanced stability in Iraq. End comment.

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